

# "Corrigan Hill" New Name for "Wrong-Way" Roadway

**De Pere Woman Gets Idea of Christening Deceptive Stretch of Highway in Honor of Irish Flier.**

DE PERE—At last a name has been found for that stretch of deceptive road beneath Scray's hill, off of county trunk G, about three miles southeast of De Pere, on which a motor car appears to coast up hill.

The name? Well, it should not be hard to guess. "Corrigan hill," to be sure, in honor of, or in tribute to, that intrepid young Californian, Doug Corrigan, who flew the "wrong way" across the Atlantic and landed in Ireland.

For a number of years motorists

have been stopping along this road to experience the mild sensation of seeing their cars "back up hill." Nobody thought of applying a name to the road until a few days ago when "Corrigan hill" seemed to Mrs. Ernest E. Anderson, 432 Reid street, to be most fitting. Her son, Paul, a hardware dealer, took up the suggestion and yesterday erected signs, one on the road, and another at its junction with trunk G.

Various ideas have been expressed as to what causes a vehicle to ascend uphill on this road. Some thing magnetic attraction in the earth may be responsible. Fact is the roadway is level, or nearly so, over much of the distance where a car seems to be rolling uphill. An optical illusion seems to be the answer to the phenomenon.

August 24, 1938

**ANDERSONS HAVE NAME FOR IT---IT'S CORRIGAN**



DE PERE—Paul Anderson, De Pere hardware dealer, yesterday afternoon erected signs naming the deceptive piece of roadway off County Trunk G southeast of the city where a car appears to coast up hill in honor of Douglas Corrigan, famous wrong-way flier. He is shown

putting the finishing touches on his "Corrigan Hill" sign while Miss Bernice Watermolen walks behind a car driven by her sister Thelma which is backing "up hill." The Watermolen girls are from Green Bay.

**August 30, 1941**

# **Town Tales**

**By JOHN TORINUS**

**GRAVITY HILL** southeast of De Pere has been the subject of three recent columns in a Milwaukee paper by Richard S. Davis, and while Davis has pledged that he has written his last word about Gravity hill and wants to hear no more of the controversy which has been raging about it, the spot has received quite a bit of publicity to date.

The whole thing started when someone wrote in that they had heard about the hill and wanted to know more about it. A Green Bay man wrote in to say that he had never heard of such a place and that the idea was all "baloney." That started the furor. Other Green Bay and De Pere residents have been protesting ever since, giving exact details about the hill, and this week's column was made up of testimonials from people around Milwaukee who drove all the way up to see the hill—and seeing believed.

One correspondent who used to attend St. Norbert recalled this poem:

Oh, they try and they try  
To debunk and defy  
The saga of Gravity hill.  
Wild tales they've related,  
But the doughty old grade  
Is cheatin' on gravity still.

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**GRAVITY HILL** may be something new to Milwaukeeans but it is an old story to most residents in this vicinity. That's the spot just off County Trunk G that they tried to rename Corrigan hill after that name became famous for people and things which operate backwards.

This particular freak of nature was investigated quite thoroughly some years back by Stanley Barnett, Press-Gazette reporter who photographed a car on the supposed grade with a giant level mounted on the running board, which proved it an optical illusion: that when you think you are backing up a grade you are actually backing down one.

June 19, 1937

# ***Town Tales***

**BY JOHN B. TORINUS**

**WE DON'T** know if it's because we're psychologically unbalanced or just given to coasting up hills, but there's a natural phenomenon, an optic chimera, a mirage or whatever you wish to call it up at De Pere that has us stopped.

Apparently it is a bit beyond the ken of a number of other people too, however, for we understand that unbelievers have been parted of a deal of money over the unnatural experiment.

It is a hill where your car, stopped absolutely still on the downgrade, gradually moves and starts to coast rapidly backward, apparently uphill.

Take County Trunk G out of De Pere and go for some way past the narrow bridge until you come to the wide gravel road which leads off to the right up to the old quarry near the ledge. You go down it to the first mailbox, on your right, and stop your car with the front wheels even with the box. Then put the vehicle in neutral, take your foot off the brake and wait. Your car will gradually start backing up, apparently right up the hill, and if you let it go will proceed right to the top of the hill, down the other side and up an even steeper one.

This spot has become so famous that people come to Green Bay from all over the surrounding country-side and ask how to get there. If you aren't a scientist, you can get out and lie on your stomach and sit along the road, you can take your car to the garage and have the clutch checked, or you can hie yourself off to a psychoanalyst, and you'll still be backing up hill.

If you are a scientist, and there is a fellow in our office who is, you'll put a level on your running board, and find out that your car is really going down a very slight incline.

# And so it goes --

By Richard S. Davis

## Who Knows About 'Magic Hill'?

**M**R. A. J. COON of Wauwatosa comes to this department, as a sensible man should, with a problem that has been besetting him. He has noted with keen satisfaction how ably other perplexities have been laid to rest and has decided that it is only a question of time before the answer to his own riddle will be found and presented herein.

Somewhat shamefully, however, the almost infallible department admits that Mr. Coon's difficulty is a little severe. Help must be asked and a humble petition is now presented to the ladies and gentlemen who live in or near De Pere, Wis. Presumably the ladies and gentlemen thus fortunately situated are fully conversant with the subject of Mr. Coon's letter and will be more than glad to explain everything to his satisfaction.

Here, then, is the letter of the Wauwatosan:

Dear Sir: My problem concerns two men who recently returned from their vacations. They are fine fellows and up to the present I have believed everything they told me, but now I am skeptical.

One of my friends came back with the story of "Magic Hill" on Highway G, 4 1/2 miles east of De Pere. He said that if you come to a stop at a certain spot on the bottom of the hill your car will back up the hill for a distance of about four blocks. The speed is just about as fast as a man can walk.

This friend told the other man I have mentioned and the latter went to "Magic Hill" to see for himself. He came back and reported that he stopped with his car in neutral to investigate the mystery, as a new cardboard sign told him he was at the right place.

While he was looking around, his car backed up. He then went down hill again and turned his motor off. Again he was carried back up the hill.

This happened early in the morning and my friend swears he had not been drinking. He had a level with him and he says he is fully satisfied that he actually did back up the hill.

I am confident that you will be able to account for this apparent phenomenon.

Yours sincerely,

A. J. COON.

As has been fully confessed, Mr. Coon is leaning on a broken reed. This department, in his uneventful life, has never yet backed up a hill, with or without the motor running, and he frankly has no idea what is the secret of "Magic Hill."

Here, in any case, is a problem well worth investigating. Perhaps we are here on the threshold of a mammoth discovery. Perhaps we are now to learn a system for confounding the law of gravity.

If it is finally established that motorcars can be made to back up hill without the expenditure of any gas, the pleasures of a Sabbath ride in the country should be enormously enhanced. The thrifty motorist will but need to find a hill that suits him and then ride down and up, up and down, until the little woman starts complaining of boredom. Then on to another hill and further entertainment without cost.

Frankly, however, this depart-

ment is a little doubtful about "Magic Hill." At any rate the residents of De Pere and vicinity are now appealed to in the hope that they'll get to the bottom, not only of the hill, but of the problem as well.

Come, good people, will you help us out?

# And so it goes --

By Richard S. Davis

## The Correct Name Is 'Ghost Hill'

MR. A. J. COON of Wauwatosa, a gentleman who owns an inquiring mind, appears to have started something when he appealed to this ever obliging servant to find out about "Magic Hill." Mr. Coon, you may remember, wanted to learn more about the mysterious slope near De Pere, Wis., which, according to report, pulls a car that has gone down the incline right back up again, thus making a conspicuous monkey of the law of gravity.

In response to the urging of Mr. Coon, there was printed in this corner the testimony of two travelers who motored down the hill and, oops! backed up again, much to their befuddlement. Just between us, this department was a little skeptical of the entire legend, what with one thing and another, including the heat, but it was a matter of both pride and duty to seek out the truth.

Two letters in reply to the urgent appeal arrived in short order—one from a Green Bay resident, the other from a gentleman who lives in De Pere. The first was signed "Disgusted," which gives you a rough idea. Anyway, this was his note:

Dear Sir: What's the big idea, filling up your column with baloney about a hill that runs both up and down, like a teeter-totter?

I have lived in and around Green Bay since away back there when the Packers meant a bunch of guys putting up dried beef or something, maybe prunes, but I never did hear of a hill that was even better than a roller coaster. I'm here to say that if there was such a hill and a guy could ride all afternoon without a nickel for gas, there wouldn't be a soul left in Green Bay on Sunday afternoon, unless the Bears were playing here.

Personally, I think somebody has been stringing your Mr. Coon. Anyhow, it doesn't make sense when somebody takes poor old Gravity by the tail and swings him for a loop. Give us something that adds up better than that one does.

Yours sincerely,  
DISGUSTED.

In marked contrast to this scornful epistle is the letter of the thoughtful and dignified De Pere citizen who signs himself merely "O'Neil." In a conscientious effort to set the public straight, "O'Neil" has replied:

Dear Sir: In answer to the query of Mr. A. J. Coon about "Magic Hill" near De Pere, I feel it is my duty as one of the faithful to defend our beloved hill.

About five miles west of De Pere, on Country Trunk G, there is a steep and treacherous grade known as "Scray's Hill." At the foot of this young mountain are two minor slopes and here, sir, is where gravity ends. It is an established fact that after descending either of these hills a car, upon stopping, will back up smartly to the top of the hill. It has been my pleasure and my privilege to enjoy this phenomenon over and over again and to my heart's content.

I defy anyone who makes light of our "Ghost Hill" (it was inaccurately called "Magic Hill" by someone who is not in the know). And I extend to you and all the believing my heartfelt invitation

to come to De Pere and try "Ghost Hill."

A faithful reader,  
O'NEIL.

So here we have Green Bay aligned against De Pere in no very pleasant fashion. On the face of it, the De Pere resident's testimony is by far the more persuasive, since he has himself enjoyed the novel experience of riding the wrong way at no cost to anybody.

It has long been the practice of this department never to snort at a statement by a man named O'Neil and in this instance his testimony is accepted as gospel truth. If, however, he'll excuse it, please, there will be no trip, either up or down "Ghost Hill."

After all, there should be some limit to what a man must give to his job.



# And so it goes --

By Richard S. Davis

## The Last, the Very Last

UNLESS something sensational occurs to merit further discussion, this is the last time for mention in this space of Gravity hill, alias Magic hill, alias sundry other arresting titles. Other people may run on and on about the mysterious slope, but this department is determined, barring only some earth shaking development, to say no more about it.

It is only the part of a gentleman, however, to acknowledge some of the letters that have come this way as the result of the disclosure that up there near De Pere is a hill that apparently laughs at gravity until its very sides ache. Many other comments have been received, but most of these have been so jocular and derisive that there's no sense in paying any attention to them. This, after all, is a serious matter.

And now let's get down to business, with the report of Bob Paske, writing from Wauwatosa. Says he:

Dear Sir: I still cling to the old adage that seein's believin'. I saw and now I believe. Now, sir, take note. Here are the facts as I and two equally skeptical friends found them:

First, there are two hills, plainly marked "Magic Hill No. 1" and "Magic Hill No. 2."

Second, the hills are not located five miles west of De Pere on County Trunk G, but instead are two miles southeast of De Pere and a half mile west of County Trunk G.

Third, one may take a free ride either backward or forward on the two hills as long as he goes in an easterly direction.

And now let us hear from "A Friend From North Milwaukee," a friend indeed because he isn't the least bit cross about what happened to him. He writes:

Dear Sir: This is just to let you know that you have wasted a perfectly good hour of our time. We were on our way north and had to pass very near De Pere, so we thought we might just as well try out that "Magic Hill."

Don't get me wrong—the hill was really worth trying out. It really did seem to pull us uphill. But, boy, did we get lost trying to find it, just because your informants said west of De Pere, instead of east.

We got tied up on a road under construction west of De Pere, and I mean tied up. We finally got back to De Pere and a filling station attendant said that 17 cars had got lost the day before for the same reason. These were only the cars that had stopped at his station.

And now the report of Mary K. Wiley of Nekoosa, who testifies:

Dear Sir: We drove 120 miles to satisfy our curiosity. We were all very skeptical about the whole matter and, upon stopping at the bottom of the hill, we fully expected to remain there. But—imagine our surprise—we started to back up hill. This was with the ignition turned off—in order to convince the back seat drivers I even took out the key and held it up for them to see.

After repeating this seven or eight times, we felt it warranted investigation. So we got out and

walked around. After almost an hour, we believed we had solved the mystery.

We learned that this hill is in the middle of a larger hill. These smaller hills (there are two, by the way) are between dips in the larger hill and are so small that they don't change the downhill slope of the large hill.

The top of this small hill is really lower than the bottom. It is a case of "up is down and down is up." We found it much easier to walk "up" the small hill than "down."

And finally there is the completely final document of Gene Clifford of Juneau, Wis., who writes:

Dear Sir: While I was attending St. Norbert college at De Pere, 1938-'39, I once had the opportunity to back up that hill myself. For a variety of reasons, I clearly recall the day when a friend—Gene Donohue of Antigo—lured me into a car with two Green Bay girls for a trip to the hill.

At that time, I, too, was a skeptic. But, believe me, I changed my mind in a hurry when the girls drove down the hill, stopped the car, shut off the motor and—bingo!—we rolled right back to the crest just as smooth and unchalant as you please. There we sat, with old Lizzie (the car) fairly jumping to try it all over again.

I have never heard the hill called anything but "Gravity Hill." When that Irishman pulled his wrong way hop in some spare airplane parts there was a move on foot to rechristen it "Corrigan Hill." The move was countered and trampled when "Gravity Hill" supporters popularized this little song:

"Oh, they try and they try  
To debunk and defy  
The saga of Gravity hill.  
Wild tales they've relayed,  
But the doughty old grade  
Is cheatin' on gravity still."